

# Low Back Pain

For information on all types of injuries visit:  
<http://www.cssphysio.com.au/forpatients.html>



## Tips For Looking after Your Back

Also see the following headings on low back pain. There are under our Resources section, in 'For Patients':

- Disc Injury
- Facet Joint Syndrome
- Chronic Back Pain
- Computer & LBP

Sitting often makes your back worse, therefore:

Sit for as little time as possible.

Regularly stand up to allow your back to straighten.

If your physiotherapist has given you instruction on performing backward arching exercises, do some of these immediately when you stand up after sitting or bending.

Make sure your seat is firm and the back is straight, and that you have an adequate lumbar support to keep the arch in your back.

This is particularly important first thing in the morning when driving. In your work chair, change your position regularly (eg lean back for several seconds at a time), and always avoid leaning forward while sitting.



Going from sitting to standing will sometimes be difficult. This is usually because it is the sitting that has made you worse, not the

standing up. It may help to do some gentle arching exercises when you stand.

If sitting helps your pain and standing and walking makes it worse, talk to your physiotherapist. You may have a different problem to what is being described here.

### **DRIVING:**

Driving can be particularly bad for your back because car seats are often poorly designed, and stretching your legs out to the pedals forces your back into more of a bent position. You may benefit from adjusting the tilt of your seat, or placing a towel or firm cushion on the back part of your seat (under your bottom) to ensure that your hips are as high as your knees. As well as this, place a lumbar support behind your back (if there is not an adequate one present). Move your car seat forward as far as you safely can, so that your knees are bent when you reach for the pedals. Be careful getting in and out of the car. Try not to twist your back.



### **BENDING:**

Bending your back for long periods of time, particularly under load, will aggravate your condition. In particular, if you are tall and working over a standard bench, such as in the kitchen, you will find it harder to maintain a



healthy spinal posture. Your physiotherapist should talk to you about techniques for bending. One strategy may be to teach you to do more bending from the hips in combination with a twisting movement is particularly harmful, and is the reason why a lot of backs become sore in the first place. Bending after rising in the morning is potentially hazardous, and can remain so for one to two hours after you rise. Bending to get dressed first thing in the morning is often a problem so:



You may want to warm up first with a shower and a few gentle stretches (avoiding bending).

Try to keep your back straight. Modify the way you put on your clothes, for instance, bringing your knee up so that you can reach your foot with a straight back.

If you have acute pain, wear slip-on shoes where possible.

### **LIFTING:**

Obviously lifting can be risky, particularly in the acute stages of lower back pain. Your physiotherapist will give you instructions on correct lifting technique and on recommended lifting loads. Avoid lifting for several minutes or more if you have just been bending or sitting. It may help to do some arching exercises first.



### **WALKING:**

Most people with lower back pain find walking makes their back feel better. Start off by doing regular short walks and if this is comfortable, gradually increase the time that you are walking. If you have been forced to sit for longer than your comfortable time period, go for a walk after getting up. Be careful walking up-hills and stairs as this makes you bend forward. If walking makes your back worse, talk to your physiotherapist.

### **STANDING:**

Standing in one place will often aggravate your back after a period of time. Simply moving around or going for a walk should ease this. Standing still is preferable to sitting in most situations, but try to change your position regularly.

### **LYING:**

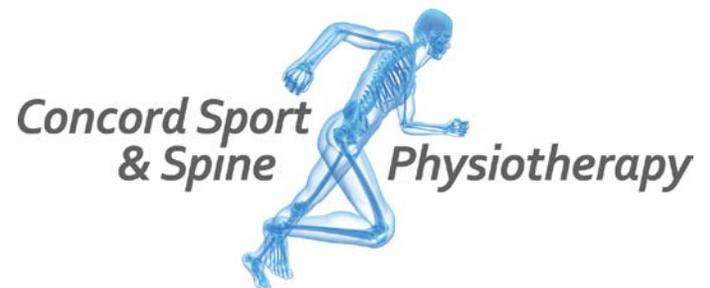
If your back pain is acute and severe, it may be necessary to spend some time lying down. However this should be kept to a minimum. If you are not feeling better after two days, you should try to move around more. If this doesn't help, speak to your physiotherapist. In the acute stage, getting up from lying will often be very painful (see below).

### **GETTING OUT OF BED IN THE MORNING:**

Your physiotherapist should give you instructions on how to get up safely. Morning stiffness and pain is very common, and is one of the last things to get better when recovering from a back injury. In the early stages, getting up after lying can be very painful. Practice the technique given to you by your physiotherapist. Your back is always more vulnerable first thing in the morning, so do as little bending as possible for at least the first one to two hours.

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